Saskatchewan
Community Resources

Building independence

With about 2,200 employees and a budget of more than $600 million, Community Resources is one of the largest departments in the Saskatchewan government.

Community Resources was formed in 2002 following the government's decision to incorporate the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation into what was the former Department of Social Services. The new name more accurately reflects the goals and mandate of the department.

We strive to provide an array of programs and services helping low income people and families build greater social and economic independence.

The decisions, policies and activities of the department are guided by a long term strategy. The Strategic Plan is built upon the belief that every Saskatchewan citizen has the right to fully participate in the economic and social life of the province. This is balanced with the responsibility to contribute to the economic and social life of the province to the extent they are able.

Based on a partnership approach, the Strategic Plan is building a fundamental change in the way programs and services are delivered. Rather than doing things for people, this new approach emphasizes encouraging, assisting and working with people so they can improve the quality of life for themselves, their families and their communities.

A Focused Vision

Community Resources' vision statement defines the motivation behind programs and services:

- Saskatchewan people, regardless of differences in needs or circumstances, have opportunities to contribute and be included in the economic and social life of the province.

Consistent Goals

The Strategic Plan is based on two overall goals for Saskatchewan people:

- Economic independence and self reliance.
- Inclusion in families and communities.

A Strategy for "Building Independence"

Phase I

In 1997, the department launched its *Building Independence* strategy that began the process of fundamentally redesigning the social assistance program.

In the initial phase, three new programs were introduced that build upon existing programs and the department's enhanced accountability measures. These programs help improve the quality of life for low income working families.

- The ***Saskatchewan Employment Supplement*** is a monthly payment that adds to income from a job, farming, self-employment, or from child or spousal support.
- The ***Saskatchewan Child Benefit*** is a monthly benefit that assists lower income families with the cost of raising children. This monthly allowance is paid to eligible families for each child under the age of 18 years.
- ***Family Health Benefits***, administered by Saskatchewan Health, helps reduce the costs of health services for children. Families receiving the Saskatchewan Employment Supplement or the Saskatchewan Child Benefit automatically qualify for Family Health Benefits.
- The ***Provincial Training Allowance*** provides income support for adult learners enrolled in bridging programs, helping them to make the transition into jobs.

These programs can help families leave social assistance for jobs. They also provide peace of mind that the move to independence will not jeopardize their children's health or the family's economic stability.

These programs further prevent low income working families from being forced on to welfare because of the health needs of their children.

Phase II

The second stage of redesign was implemented in May 2001 and focused on a review of service delivery and enhanced supports for low income people.

A new service delivery model has been implemented in department offices throughout the province. This new model includes:

- **A Contact Centre located in Regina.** As the first point of access for all new applicants, centre staff provide information about community resources and government programs which can help the applicant maintain independence. They assess eligibility for social assistance and the applicant's ability to get a job.
- ***JobsFirst*** provides employable applicants with information about local job opportunities, assistance in writing a resumé and help in preparing for a job interview. Career and Employment Services offices across the province provide the service.
- ***First Step*** orientation sessions provide information about social assistance and community-based resources.
- **Transition Planning Services** help those on social assistance develop a plan to reduce the barriers that keep them from getting a job.

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A Strategy for "Building Independence" cont'd

Phase II (continued)

More than 20,000 families in Saskatchewan are better off as a direct result of *Building Independence*, other support programs, and a strong economy. Since 1997, there has been:

- a reduction of over 7,800 families, including almost 17,000 children, leaving social assistance;
- a substantial increase in disposable (after tax) income for families working for minimum wage;
- the lowest social assistance caseload since 1991; and,
- in 2006-07 the single largest basic allowance increase since the social assistance program was introduced nearly 40 years ago.

More people are working and the number of people living in poverty has dropped as a result of these initiatives.

Community Resources delivers programs through four major divisions:

- Employment and Income Assistance
- Child and Family Services
- Community Living
- Saskatchewan Housing Corporation

Income Assistance

Income Assistance offers supports and services to people with challenges that make it difficult to live more independently and those who need help providing for their children. The division also provides financial support to low-income seniors. Supports and services include:

- Saskatchewan Assistance Plan
- Transitional Employment Allowance
- Saskatchewan Income Plan for Seniors
- Child Day Care Subsidy
- Saskatchewan Employment Supplement
- Saskatchewan Child Benefit
- Saskatchewan Rental Housing Supplement

Child and Family Services

Child and Family Services

Child and Family Services provides targeted support programs and services to at-risk children, youth and families. It also supports child welfare services to protect children from abuse and neglect. In addition, the division provides care, supervision, assessment and treatment for children in the Minister's care. The division continues to develop new programs, services and resources to support families at risk and prevent crisis situations that require child welfare interventions.

The goal of Child and Family Services is to help children, youth and families to become healthy, independent members of the community. Programs and services are designed to preserve and strengthen the family unit. The main program and service areas include:

- **Child protection**, including Family Support Services
- **Targeted support services**, including Teen and Young Parent Program and family violence services
- **Services for Children and Youth in care**
- **Adoption and Post-care services**

The department also has agreements with 18 First Nations, which give authority to First Nations Child and Family Services Agencies to deliver child welfare services to children and families living on reserve.

Community Living

Community Living helps individuals with intellectual disabilities live and work in their communities. Division staff work in partnership with other government departments and community-based organizations to create and maintain support structures and services.

Some services are provided directly to individuals and their families by division staff located in 15 communities across the province. Most programs and services are delivered through an extensive community-based, residential, day program, and early childhood services delivery system.

Community Living also provides:

- community-based social work case management support to approximately 3,300 people with intellectual disabilities
- program development consultant services
- liaison with about 100 community-based organizations
- family support services including respite and early childhood intervention programs
- developmental and functional life skills services, such as activity centres and sheltered workshops

Community Living also operates Valley View Centre in Moose Jaw, which provides long-term services for people with intellectual disabilities. Valley View serves adults whose needs cannot currently be met within the community.

Home FIRST

Housing

Community Resources, through the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation (SHC), promotes self-sufficiency and independence through the provision of housing and housing services for families, seniors and others who could not otherwise afford safe, secure shelter.

SHC is responsible for a portfolio of nearly 30,000 housing units in about 340 Saskatchewan communities. Of these, approximately 800 are managed directly by the Corporation, 18,400 are managed by housing authorities, and more than 10,800 units are managed and operated through agreements with non-profit groups and co-operatives. SHC maintains operating agreements with more than 450 organizations, including local housing authorities, housing co-operatives, non-profit agencies, and private landlords. The Corporation complements the work of the private sector housing industry by making housing more accessible to modest-income Saskatchewan people. Over 1,500 volunteers support the effort of housing authorities in Saskatchewan.

In 2004, the department introduced *HomeFirst*. It is a five year strategy that will, with the support and co-operation of all levels of government and communities, contribute $161 million for housing supply programs and about $39 million for a housing supplement for low to moderate-income families and persons with disabilities.

HomeFirst is a key component of *Building Independence*. The strategy uses housing to support employment, education and training and also focuses on neighbourhood renewal and economic prosperity in the province's inner cities and the north.

The department, through SHC, offers a number of programs which help make affordable housing available to modest income families. They include:

- Centenary Affordable Housing Program
- Accelerated Homeowner and Repair Option Programs
- Neighbourhood Home Ownership Program
- Social and affordable rental programs
- Saskatchewan Assisted Living Services
- Saskatchewan Emergency Repair Program, the Saskatchewan Home Adaptations for Independence Program, and the Saskatchewan Rental Repair Program.

Service Delivery

Many department programs are delivered through regional offices and local service centres. For instance, Employment and Income Assistance and Child Welfare programs are delivered through five regional offices. Through ongoing integration of these two delivery systems, Community Resources will ensure more efficient and effective service to clients.

Similarly, Saskatchewan Housing Corporation is focusing on better service and integration with local housing authorities and community agencies. It operates the territory offices serving six geographic regions.

Community Resources also relies heavily on hundreds of community-based organizations to deliver programs and services on our behalf. These independent organizations form an integral part of the human services chain by addressing local issues and needs.

Services range from group homes for people with disabilities and day cares to mobile crisis units and food security. CBOs help people to build independence, participate in their communities and enjoy improved quality of life.

Office of Disability Issues

The province's Office of Disability Issues (ODI), established in 1998, is hosted by Community Resources. ODI serves as both a focal point for provincial government initiatives on disability policy and a single point of entry for anyone seeking information or assistance regarding disability policy, programs and services.

Contact Us

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